

PROMINENT DOCTRINES

AND

PECULIAR USAGES

OF

The Methodist Church.

STATED WITH SCRIPTURE PROOFS.

Compiled by the REV. JOHN A. WILLIAMS, D.D.

Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are repentance, faith, and holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the power of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself.—JOHN WESLEY.

Porch

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PROMINENT DOCTRINES AND PECULIAR USAGES

OF

THE METHODIST CHURCH.

METHODISM dates its existence from the formation of the Societies founded by the Rev. John Wesley in the year 1739.

The Methodist Church was organized in September, 1883, in accordance with a "Basis of Union" accepted by the Conferences of the various Methodist Churches of the Dominion and Newfoundland. It defines itself, and its purpose, in the language descriptive of the first Methodist Societies, as "a company of men having the form, and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to

receive the word of exhortation, to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

The condition of membership in the Methodist Church is, "A desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from sin."

The prominent doctrines of the Methodist Church are—

I. UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION.

Methodism proclaims a universal redemption—that Jesus Christ died for all mankind, and freely offers to save all men on the condition of penitence for sin, and faith in the atonement.

1. God gave his Son Jesus Christ to die, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 6 ; vi. 40-47 ; 1 John iv. 9, 10, 14.

2. By his death Jesus Christ made an

atonement for *all* mankind. Heb. ii. 9 ; 2 Cor. v. 15 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

3. Christ died for *sinners*, without respect of persons or conditions in life ; and all men are sinners. John i. 29 ; Rom. v. 6, 7, 8 ; viii. 32 ; 1 John ii. 2.

4. The invitations of the Gospel are made to *all*. Isa. xiv. 22 ; Matt. xi. 28 ; Rev. 22. 17 ; John vii. 37 ; Rom. x. 13.

5. The grace and the Spirit of God *enlighten and lead all men* so that they may believe unto salvation. Titus ii. 11, 12 ; John xvi. 8.

6. God hath no pleasure in the death of ^{the} wicked. Ezek. xviii. 31, 32 ; xxxiii. 11 ; Pet. iii. 8.

II. REPENTANCE.

1. Repentance literally denotes a change of mind, or purpose, reconsideration. In the Scriptures it implies such a reconsideration and change of mind as results from a know-

ledge of sin, and a sorrow for it because of its malignant nature, and its opposition to God. This state of mind, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, induces an effective repentance, called in the Scripture, "repentance unto life," "and repentance unto salvation." Acts xi. 18 ; 2 Cor. vii. 10.

2. Repentance is wrought in man by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by the teachings of the grace of God. John xvi. 7, 8 ; Titus ii. 11. 12 ; Rom. ii. 4 ; v. 15.

3. As preparatory to pardon, and the renewal of the soul, repentance is a first duty. Matt. iii. 2 ; Acts iii. 19 ; viii. 22 ; xvii. 30.

4. True repentance is indicated and accompanied by certain evidences.

(1) By personal consciousness. The mind takes knowledge of its own states and operations.

(2) By fruits meet for repentance, or answerable to amendment of life.

(a) Contrition. Ps. li. 17 ; Matt. v. 3 ; 2 Cor. viii. 10.

(b) Confession. Prov. xxviii. 13 ; Luke xviii. 13 ; 1 John i. 9.

(c) Amendment. Ps. cxix. 59 ; Isa. i. 16, 17 ; lv. 6, 7 ; Matt. xii. 8.

III. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

1. Justification is that act of God's free grace in which he pardons our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight for the sake of Jesus Christ who made an atonement for sin. Rom. viii. 33 ; iii. 24, 25 ; Eph. i. 7 ; Acts xiii. 38, 39 ; Rom. iv. 4-8.

2. The leading condition of justification or pardon, is faith in Jesus Christ, whose person and work are one as a revelation of God, and of all saving truth. Rom. v. 1 ; Gal. ii. 16 ; Acts xvi. 31 ; xiii. 38, 39 ; John iii. 16.

(a) Faith is the act of receiving and trusting in Christ for salvation. Eph. i. 13 ; Rom. iv. 5 ; ix. 9, 10.

(*b*) It is the act of the whole man under the influence of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. xii. 3 ; John i. 11 ; Col. ii. 12.

(*c*) It is an "assent to the whole gospel of Christ ; a full reliance in the blood of Christ ; a trust in the merits of his life, death and resurrection ; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, *as given for us and living in us* ; a closing with him, and a clinging to him as our "Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,—in one word, our Salvation."—*Wesley*.

IV. REGENERATION.

1. Regeneration is the work wrought in the believing soul by the Holy Spirit, whereby it passes from death unto life.

2. It is the new birth of the soul whereby we become children of God. It is called in the Scriptures, "being born again," "born of the Spirit," being "new creatures

in Christ Jesus," being "renewed after the image of God," and "born of God." John iii. 3, 8 ; 2 Cor. v. 7 ; Eph. iv. 34 ; 1 John iii. 2 ; John i. 12, 13.

3. Justification is the pardon of sin, whereby we become relatively just ; regeneration is a renewal of the nature through which we become actually just. Rom. viii. 1-4.

V. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

1. By the witness of the Spirit is meant the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to the soul of the believer—not only of God's good will towards him, but that his sins are blotted out, and that he is reconciled to God, and adopted into his family. Acts v. 32 ; xv. 8 ; 2 Cor. i. 22 ; Eph. i. 13 ; Rom. viii. 16 ; Gal. iv. 6.

2. The secondary evidence is the witness of our own spirit, or the testimony of personal consciousness of the fulfilment of the divine promises, and the exhibition of the

fruits of the Spirit in Christian character and life. 1 John iv. 13 ; iii. 20, 21 ; Rom. v. 1, 5, 11 ; 2 Cor. i. 12 ; Gal. v. 22, 23.

VI. FALLING FROM GRACE.

The Methodist Church does *not* admit that apostasy from God, or that any degree of backsliding is *necessary* ; but it does admit that *it is possible* so to fall from the favour of God as to perish ; and for the following reasons :

1. Some angels have irrecoverably fallen from their original holiness, and from the favour of God. Jude vi ; 2 Pet. ii. 4.

2. Our first parents fell from original holiness, and became subject to the displeasure of God. Job xxxi. 33 ; Rom. v. 14-19 ; Gen. iii. 24.

3. Direct affirmations that final apostasy is possible. Matt. xxiv. 12, 13 ; 1 Cor. ix. 27 ; Heb. x. 26, 17. Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13.

4. The Scriptures abound in cautions

and warnings against final apostasy. Matt. v. 13 ; Mark 13. 34-37 ; Luke xxii. 40 ; John xv. 2-6 ; Rom. xi. 20, 21 ; and numerous other passages.

5. Some have so fallen from grace. John xiii. 27 ; Acts i. 25 ; 1 Cor. x. 1-6.

VII. SANCTIFICATION.

Methodism preaches a salvation for all men, a salvation for the whole man, and for the whole life of man.

1. "When we begin to believe, then sanctification begins, and as faith increases holiness increases."—*Wesley*.

2. Sanctification is the purification of the heart of the believer from all sin. It begins in regeneration, but does not end there. It is received by faith. Acts xxvi. 16 ; 1 John i. 7-9.

3. In the life of religious experience, sanctification exists in different degrees. Its progress is seen in the increase of faith,

hope and love. It is the process by which integrity of moral character and conduct are realized. 2 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; 2 Pet. i. 4-8.

4. It is completed in an important sense when the believer is made holy in heart and life. 1 Pet. i. 15. This state of grace is sometimes called "Entire Sanctification" 1 Thess. v. 23, 24; Col. i. 22. Sometimes it is called "Perfect Love." 1 John iv. 16, 17.

5. We may be made perfect in love or wholly sanctified in this life. Eph. v. 25-27; 1 John i. 7; Matt. v. 8; xxii. 37-40; Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

6. Entire Sanctification in its attainment is usually gradual—it may be instantaneous, as, like Justification, it is received by faith. Acts xv. 9.

7. This state of grace is both attained and maintained by faith in the atonement. Heb. x. 10, 14, 22, 38.

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.

I. BAPTISM.

1. Christian baptism is a religious rite, consisting of an external application of water to a person in a justified relation to God, or earnestly seeking such a relation, by an authorized minister of the Gospel, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matt. xxviii. 19 ; Acts viii. 26-39 ; x. 47, 48.

2. Christian baptism was instituted by our Lord after his resurrection, and enjoined by his Apostles. Matt. xxviii. 19 ; Acts ii. 38.

3. It is an outward and visible sign and seal of inward grace, either sought or attained : Of saving grace sought, Acts ii. 38 ; viii. 36, 37 ; of saving grace attained, Gal. iii. 27 ; 1 Pet. iii. 21.

4. It is an initiatory rite by which

persons are admitted into the Christian Church. Acts ii. 41, 47 ; xvi. 31-34.

5. The proper subjects for baptism are :

(a) *Infants*. Because they are, through the atonement, in a justified state and relation to God. Rom. v. 15, 18 ; Mark x. 13-16. Our Lord declares infants to be subjects of the kingdom of heaven, and welcomes them to himself, and to the privileges of the kingdom. Matt. xviii. 2-5, 10 ; xix. 14 ; Acts ii. 39.

(b) *Adult believers*. Because they have been born again through faith in Christ. Acts viii. 36, 37 ; x. 47 ; Mark xvi. 16.

(c) *True penitents* are suitable subjects for baptism. They may receive it as a means of grace sought ; as a sign and seal of the baptism of the Spirit ; as a help to a greater faith by which in the symbol they may find the reality. Acts ii. 38.

6. The mode of baptism in the Methodist

Church is by pouring or sprinkling, but the candidates for baptism may be immersed if they so desire it.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. The Lord's Supper is a positive institution of the Christian Church, and the obligation of observing it rests upon all the disciples of Christ. Mark xiv. 22-24 ; Matt. xxvi. 26, 27 ; 1 Cor. xi. 23, 25.

2. This sacrament is to be continued in the Church in remembrance of Christ until he come again. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8 ; xi. 26 ; Luke xxii. 19.

3. It is designed to remind us of the humanity of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 24 ; of his sacrificial sufferings for us, Phil. ii. 7, 8 ; and of our redemption by his death, 1 Cor. xi. 26 ; x. 16 ; Luke xxii. 19, 20.

PECULIAR USAGES OF METHODISM.

I. CLASS-MEETINGS.

1. The design of class-meetings is to afford to Christians frequent opportunities of conversation in reference to their personal religious experience, and of praying with and for each other ; of receiving the word of exhortation ; of watching over one another in love, so that they may help each other to work out their salvation, and thus fulfil the law of Christ.

2. They are, as to their character and design, eminently Scriptural. Heb. x. 24, 25 ; James v. 16 ; Col. iii. 16 ; Ps. lxvi. 16 ; Mal. iii. 16, 17.

II. LOVE-FEASTS.

Love-feasts, or feasts of charity, were held by the apostolic churches. Their design is to show forth the love and fellowship of Christians by a plain feast of bread

and water, and to give them an opportunity to speak together of religious experience, for the purpose of encouragement in the Christian life. Love-feasts are Scriptural. Acts ii. 42, 46 ; xx. 7 ; Jude 12.

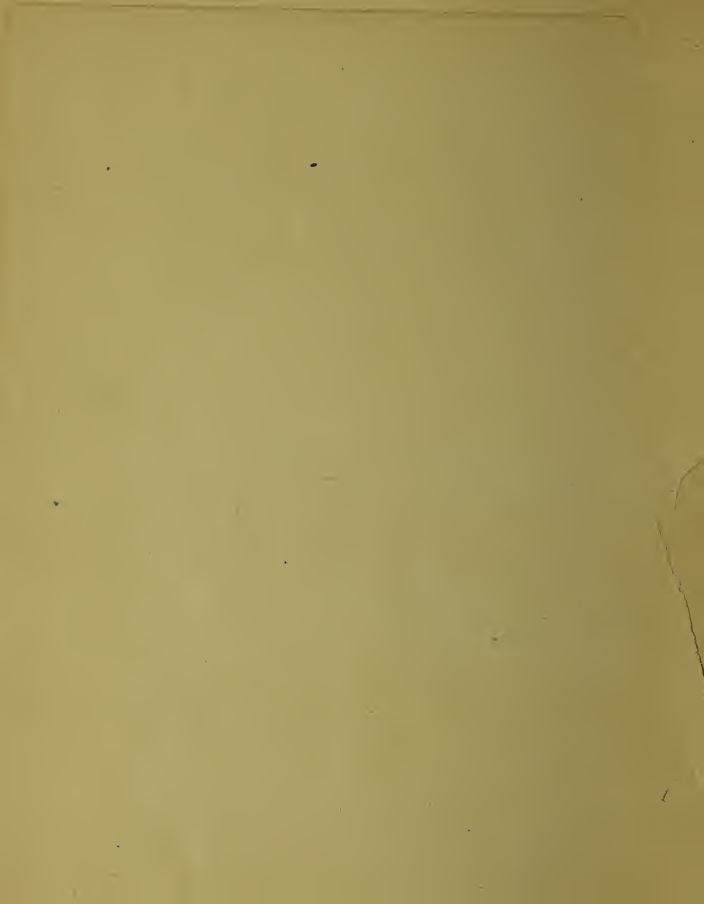
III. ITINERANT MINISTRY.

A prominent peculiarity in the economy of Methodism is its itinerant ministry, adopted with a view of meeting a want not fully met by a settled pastorate.

1. In its character and design it is Scriptural. Our Lord "went about doing good," teaching and preaching in the cities of Judæa and throughout Galilee. Matt. iv. 23.

2. The apostles and evangelists were travelling ministers. Mark x. 5-11 ; Matt. xxviii. 19.

3. From the "Acts of the Apostles" we may learn how truly and extensively the apostles and their assistants itinerated in their ministry. Acts viii. 4, 5, 40 ; xi. 19, 20.





TACTICS OF INFIDELS

By REV. L. A. LAMBERT,

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